TRENDS

Will Opening Lindows Bring Fresh Air to Desktops?

Despite skepticism by users on both sides of the aisle, a new operating system promises to bridge the gap between Windows and Linux. The folks behind LindowsOS *(www.lindows.com)* claim their operating system will run both Linux and Windows applications. Version 1.0 of LindowsOS is scheduled for release this quarter (and may be available by the time you read this).

This isn't the first attempt to make Windows and Linux play together nicely. Other projects—some available for years—have combined the two with varying degrees of success. NeTraverse Win4Lin *(www.netraverse.com)* creates a virtual machine on Linux that runs Windows 95 or 98, while Wine *(wine.codeweavers.com)* implements Windows APIs in Linux.

Neither of those programs works as well as running a single OS, and it's unclear if LindowsOS will be any better. "Our goal is to run all Windows software," the company states on its Web site, with this note of caution: "However, that's an ambitious objective that will take time to achieve." The OS will cost $99.

Lindows will be based on Wine. "This was Corel's plan when it developed its own Linux distribution," says Stacey Quandt, an associate analyst at Giga Information Group. She predicts that Lindows will learn—as did Corel—that the goal of running all Windows software will indeed take a long time. Shortly after accepting a $135 million investment from Microsoft, Corel abandoned its support for Wine.

Still, while full integration between the two OSs has proven elusive, it isn't all that difficult for users to get the best of both worlds. "For many, it may simply be better to either have a separate Windows partition or run Linux applications that will work adequately with their Windows counterparts to avoid the extra complexity," says Giga research fellow Rob Enderle.

—Kevin Savetz

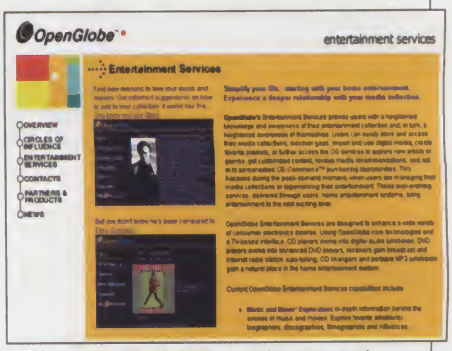
A More Productive Couch Potato

Sitting on the couch has never been more productive. Combining Internet-delivered content, media recognition, and e-commerce, **OpenGlobe** *(www.openglobe.net)*, an Indianapolis-based online-service provider, is delivering PC-style functionality to home entertainment systems.

OpenGlobe-enabled devices, such as Compaq's iPaq Music Center, have been available since July, but it was at this year's International Consumer Electronics Show that the company's full range of services was unveiled.

With OpenGlobe, you can pop an audio CD into your CD player, read about the artist's influences and discographies on your TV screen, and view cover art and track names. Additionally, you can search for media by song title, album, or artist; listen to Internet radio stations; and buy CDs. Similar capabilities for DVDs will be introduced in the coming months.

Robert Hudson, vice president of marketing, describes OpenGlobe as a way for music and movie lovers to enhance their media experience. "Press a button, and it's all there," he says.



OpenGlobe will make TV watching interactive.

The service piggybacks the user's Internet connection. To make the service work for everyone, OpenGlobe designed its content around the bandwidth constraints of dial-up connections. Users access the service with a remote control and their television.

Although subscribers will be able to use the system to make purchases, Hudson stresses that OpenGlobe is not commerce-centric. "It's like Disney World," he explains. "You don't have to buy the hat with the ears to enjoy the park, but there's the opportunity to do so."

—Jon Halpin

Now What Did I Come in Here For?

How do you jog your memory? Lists? Alarms? A string around your finger? Make way for yet another method of keeping important tasks firmly in mind: context-aware memory devices.

These gadgets, which are still in development, will issue intelligent reminders based on where you are, what you're doing, and what's going on around you, using tools like the Global Positioning System, transmitters, voice recognition, temperature gauges, cameras, and time and location sensors. Once the device knows where it is and what's going on, it can send reminders created by the user, like "Remind me to pick up ice cream if I am alone in the car and driving north past the grocery store."

Michael Beigl, a German researcher, developed a prototype digital memory aid called the MemoClip and is working on a more advanced version. He says the devices themselves—others include the CybreMinder, Stick-e Notes, and a wearable computer with "memory glasses"—could cost as little as $40 to produce, though the required infrastructure could push that into the hundreds of dollars. "Nevertheless, we are convinced that humans need some support in remembering things," says Beigl.

Jackie Fenn, an analyst at Gartner studying emerging technologies, sees "incredible potential" in context-aware applications, but doesn't expect to see memory devices enter the mainstream for at least a few years, as developers experiment with what works and what doesn't. "This whole area is a real try-it-and-see-what-sticks type of technology," says Fenn.

—Elaine X. Grant

SECTION CONTINUES ON PAGE 24